



# County Corner

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## Flathead County Noxious Weed District

Noxious weeds are a serious threat to the State of Montana. Noxious (nonnative) weeds affect everyone. Montana is leading the way on noxious weed control. The Department of Agriculture along with other agencies and associations has worked hard to create the State Noxious Weed Plan for Montana. The purpose of the Weed Plan is to sustain native vegetation while preventing further spread of noxious weeds.

Flathead County adopted its weed district in 1948 and since then has worked in cooperation with the



Mowing noxious weeds in Flathead County

### Flathead County Noxious Weed District JED FISHER, Director



A five-person Board of Directors who is appointed by the County Commission administers the Noxious Weed District. They hired the current director, Jed Fisher, in 1990.

Jed Fisher first moved here in 1989 from the east side of the mountains where he served five years as the director of Glacier County Weed District. Jed has a background in federal housing and grounds maintenance, and is also the department head for the Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department and the Building/Facilities Maintenance Program for Flathead County. Jed is a founding Board Member of the North American Weed Management Association, the Montana Weed Control Association and is an alumnus of Leadership Flathead. The Weed District was awarded the Regional Foresters Award and Outstanding Weed District by the Montana Weed Control Association.

Jed's tenure is marked with many improvements to the weed program. On a statewide level we were the first to implement the use of one-man spray rigs resulting in huge labor savings. Staff was cut from 20+ seasonal employees to six seasonal applicators. We also led the state in developing an intensive public outreach program. Other management tactics include roadside mowing.

Flathead County has just obtained a hydro seeder from the Solid Waste Department. This will be used in many areas of disturbed and bare soil, creating healthy competition to the nonnative, noxious weeds.

Flathead County is a source for helping obtain competitive grant dollars from the Noxious Weed Trust Fund. Contact us for further details.

state department of agriculture and all other weed districts statewide.

**At peak season**, we have six full-time licensed herbicide applicators and two full-time roadside mowers, in addition to a part-time education/compliance officer. Our office staff is also licensed and is well trained in the many management techniques for weed control. We also have six 100-gallon, skid-mounted rental sprayers and five five-gallon backpack sprayers. This makes it easy for the private landowner to lower costs for weed control.

Not only is the weed district responsible for the 2,500 miles of county roads and property, but we are the promoters of the state noxious weed law. This law states that it is illegal to allow noxious weeds to propagate or be allowed to go to seed unless there is a management plan in place and a recognized concerted effort in its implementation. Yes, this even includes us, the county itself. In 1993, our goals for management were included in the Flathead County Weed Management Plan and the plan itself was used as a template for other weed districts statewide.

We've also worked hard in gaining the cooperation of several public agencies that have since

recognized their responsibilities in proper weed management of their lands. Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, Department of State Lands and Natural Resources, BPA, Stoltze, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and last, but not least, the Montana Department of Transportation. In fact, the Department of Transportation has increased its funding statewide accepting the fact that these corridors are the main avenues of travel for most noxious weeds.

One current goal of ours is to see that the land that once was farmed and maintained and is now being divided, remains maintained while under construction. You've seen it. Once ground is disturbed, it creates an easy opportunity for worthless vegetation or noxious weeds to take over. Some of this vegetation will later become your problem, blowing onto your property, tumbling its thousands of seeds along with it. We are actively pursuing management plans with developers to recognize their responsibility in this cause and effect and have many already on board.

Our office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Staff is available for weed identification and recommendations. Contact us at 758-5798.

*"The needs of the future take precedence over the demands of the present."*

— County Commissioners: Joe Brenneman, Gary Hall and Dale Lauman